IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original) A method for instant messaging on a computer system, including receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender; displaying an animated character associated with said sender; and delivering said content to a user through said animated character.

Claims 2-8 (Cancelled)

Claim 9 (Original) The method of claim 1 further including:
periodically retrieving advertisement details from a server;
downloading an animated character specified to represent said advertisement;
displaying said animated character specified to represent said advertisement; and
delivering content specified for said advertisement.

Claim 10 (Original) The method of claim 1, further including:
sending an alert to a server;
receiving a response containing content from said server generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) application;
displaying an animated character associated with said AI application; and
delivering said content to a user through said animated character associated with said AI application.

Claim 11 (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said sending an alert includes:
sending a message indicating that a web search is to be performed; and
sending keywords to search in said web search.

Claim 12 (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said delivering said content comprises delivering results of said web search.

Claim 13 (Original) The method of claim 1, further including:

allowing the user to select from one or more predefined animated characters to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said user sends an IM message to said recipient.

Claim 14 (Original) The method of claim 1, further including:

allowing the user to upload an image to be used in creating an animated character to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said user sends an IM message to said recipient.

Claim 15 (Original) A method for instant messaging on a digital communication system such as a computer system or digital telephone system or combination thereof, including:

receiving one or more instant messages (IM) containing content from one or more senders;

forming a queue by creating a dynamic array and inserting incoming message into said queue;

controlling the timing of operations of actions in the queue and when required displaying an animated character associated with said sender; and

delivering said content to a user through said animated character.

Claims 16-18 (Cancelled)

Claim 19 (Original) A method for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

receiving a request from a user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an IM message to said user;

querying a database with said identification;

receiving information regarding said animated character from said database; and

forwarding said information regarding said animated character to said user.

Claims 20-30 (Cancelled)

Claim 31 (Original) An apparatus for instant messaging on a computer system, including:

an IM receiver;

an animated character displayer coupled to said IM receiver; and

an animated character content deliverer coupled to said animated character displayer.

Claims 32-38 (Cancelled)

Claim 39 (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

an advertisement details periodic retriever; and   .

an animated character downloader coupled to said advertisement details periodic retriever and to said animated character content deliverer;.

Claim 40 (Original) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

a server alert sender;

an artificial intelligence response receiver coupled to said animated character displayer and to said animated character content deliverer.

Claim 41 (Original) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein said server alert sender includes:

a web search message sender; and

a keyword sender coupled to said web search message sender.

Claim 42 (Cancelled)

Claim 43 (Original) An apparatus for managing an instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

an animated character request receiver;

a database query generator coupled to said animated character request receiver;

an animated character database information receiver; and

an animated character database information forwarder coupled to said animated character database information receiver.

Claims 44-49 (Cancelled)

Claim 50 (Original) An apparatus for instant messaging on a computer system, including:

means for receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

means for displaying an animated character associated with said sender; and

means for delivering said content to a user through said animated character.

Claims 51-61 (Cancelled)

Claim 62 (Original) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the user to select from one or more predefined animated characters to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said user sends an IM message to said recipient.

Claim 63 (Original) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the user to upload an image to be used in creating an animated character to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said user sends an IM message to said recipient.

Claim 64 (Original) An apparatus for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

means for receiving a request from a user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an IM message to said user;

means for querying a database with said identification;

means for receiving information regarding said animated character from said database; and

means for forwarding said information regarding said animated character to said user.

Claim 65-78 (Cancelled)

Claim 79 (Original) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for instant messaging on a computer system, the method including:

receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

displaying an animated character associated with said sender; and

delivering said content to a user through said animated character.

Claim 80 (Original) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, the method including:

receiving a request from a user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an IM message to said user;

querying a database with said identification;

receiving information regarding said animated character from said database; and

forwarding said information regarding said animated character to said user.